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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [UNSC](#) [MASS](#) [KPAL](#) [KJUS](#) [ECPS](#) [SY](#) [IR](#) [LE](#)
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT SLEIMAN, SPEAKER BERRI AND WALID
JUMBLATT MEET WITH CODEL MCCAIN

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: An urgent need for progress on regional peace was the common priority for President Michel Sleiman, Speaker Nabih Berri, and Druze leader Walid Jumblatt during their meetings with visiting CODEL McCain on January 8 and 9. Sleiman sought reassurances that U.S. military assistance would continue while reiterating Lebanon's support for UNSCR ¶1701. Berri opined that the Syrian-Lebanese dynamic had improved recently. Both Sleiman and Berri complained about a recent House resolution seeking to penalize satellite stations broadcasting the Hizballah channel al-Manar, and about additional security measures put in place by TSA for travelers from Lebanon to the U.S. Jumblatt said regional peace would aid Lebanon and the Iranian internal opposition, and he touched on his revised relationship with the Syrian regime. Senator McCain declared his personal commitment to peace in Lebanon and his support for continued assistance for a strong and capable Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF). End Summary.

SLEIMAN: PEACE AND ARMS WILL HELP US

¶2. (C) Regional peace efforts are vital to his country, Sleiman told visiting Senators John McCain (R-AZ), John Barrasso (R-WY) and John Thune (R-SD), and the Ambassador on January 8. Saying that "no one in Lebanon wants aggression against Israel," Sleiman lauded the success of UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1701 in keeping the Lebanese-Israeli border largely calm since 2006. The main threat to Lebanon and regional peace, according to Sleiman, is the Palestinians, who must be provided a permanent home outside of Lebanon as part of any peace deal. Recalling the LAF's losses in the 2007 Nahr al-Barid conflict, Sleiman bemoaned the LAF's poor equipment and thanked the delegation for the U.S. military assistance, which he said should continue and improve in quality. In response, Senator McCain stated his commitment to a well-equipped LAF able to control and defend all Lebanese territory.

¶3. (C) Turning to regional dynamics, Sleiman said the U.S. could best assist the Iranian opposition by condemning the human rights abuses of the Iranian regime while refraining from offering direct support to the opposition. Giving a generally positive view of relations with Syria, Sleiman said President Bashar al-Asad asked him to convey to Senator McCain that Damascus wants better relations with Washington. Sleiman also asked for Congressional action on the TSA and satellite television issues.

BERRI LAUDS RELATIONSHIP WITH SYRIA

¶4. (C) Berri also focused on regional peace issues during his meeting with CODEL McCain on January 9, and he said a

solution for Palestinian refugees would have to come from outside Lebanon. While he said that he supported UNSCR 1701, Berri refused to discuss the issue of Syrian-Iranian arms smuggling to Hizballah, preferring to concentrate on U.S. military assistance to Israel. Berri said his country's relations with Syria were the best since 2005 and that PM Hariri's visit to Damascus and the opening of embassies in both capitals demonstrated that the bilateral relationship is now on a state-to-state basis.

JUMBLATT: "WE CAN'T AFFORD ANOTHER CIVIL WAR"

¶5. (C) Jumblatt argued on January 9 that the search for comprehensive regional peace and Lebanese stability were intertwined, and he urged vigorous U.S. involvement. Saying that he feared for his community and Lebanon as a whole, Jumblatt justified his rapprochement with the Lebanese opposition and Syria as a necessary step to avoid further political and sectarian violence. "We can't afford another civil war," he said. Despite his move away from the March 14 coalition, Jumblatt expressed hope that the Special Tribunal for Lebanon "won't be compromised by international politics."

¶6. (SBU) U.S. participants:

Ambassador Michele Sison
Senator John McCain
Senator John Thune
Senator John Barrasso
Christian Brose, Foreign Affairs Advisor for Senator McCain
Vance Serchuk, Foreign Affairs Advisor for Senator Lieberman

BEIRUT 00000050 002 OF 002

Brooke Buchanan, Press Secretary for Senator McCain
Capt. John Nowell, Military Escort
Joshua Polacheck, poloff (notetaker)

¶7. (SBU) Lebanese participants in Sleiman meeting:

President Michel Sleiman
Ambassador Nabi Abi Assi, Director General of the Presidency
Three staff members and one notetaker/translator

¶8. (SBU) Lebanese participants in Berri meeting:

Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri
Ali Hamdan, Press Secretary for Speaker Berri
Five staff members

¶9. (U) CODEL McCain did not clear this cable.

SISON